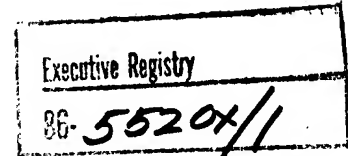


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4 December 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM:



Director of Scientific and Weapons Research

STAT

SUBJECT: Your Report on Your Meeting with NASA's  
Dr. Fletcher

1. You were correct in noting to Dr. Fletcher that a permanent base on the moon would be a much more logical step, in terms of long term solar system exploration, than a manned Mars mission spectacular. As you obviously know, a base on the moon would provide great scientific benefits. But, even more importantly, it could serve as a resupply base for missions in earth geosynchronous orbit and beyond much more cheaply than from earth. In the view of many, it is a necessary step for serious manned interplanetary research. It also will have some 'spectacular' value, because everyone looks at the moon and will be constantly reminded that a US base is there. (IUO)

2. What surprised me in your memo is the apparent unfamiliarity of Dr. Fletcher with this issue. I find it hard to believe NASA doesn't have proponents of the idea, but the "system" and the fear of interference with the shuttle program may have prevented this from bubbling up. (IUO)

3. This may be an issue where we (you) could provide a service by following up on this point and getting Dr. Fletcher in touch with influential people, who do have an ear in the White House, who share this view. Dr. Teller comes to mind immediately. But there are others. (IUO)

4. Dr. Fletcher is right that any deviation from the current emphasis on the shuttle and shuttle supported space station meets with bureaucratic resistance within NASA and a deaf ear in the White House. But he is also right that it is this current emphasis that has gotten us into the mess we are in today. A reasoned approach by an enlightened administrator of NASA might be able to change that.

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SUBJECT: Your Report on Your Meeting with NASA's Dr. Fletcher

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28 November 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Meeting with NASA Administrator Fletcher


1. At my lunch with Jim Fletcher a couple of weeks ago, he raised his concern over the possibility of a major Soviet space initiative in 1992 -- the 75th anniversary of the Revolution -- that might have a dramatic impact comparable to Sputnik in 1957. He is principally concerned about the Soviet lead over the US in establishing a space station and their experience in long endurance in space. He believes it is a very real possibility that the Soviets will attempt to send a manned mission to Mars at that time. He is wondering what the US might do that would be comparable and would somehow offset such a Soviet achievement in popular perceptions.

2. I had the impression that he is increasingly convinced that the US may have made a strategic mistake in going forward with the space shuttle instead of a space station which clearly provides the necessary intermediate stage for interplanetary flight. We talked about the enormous scope of the Soviet space program and particularly their lead in development of a heavy lift launch vehicle.

3. We talked about a possible space initiative by the United States for the early 1990's (he pointed out that 1992 also is the 500th anniversary of Columbus) and he said we could not beat the Soviets to Mars -- at best we could only tie them, and only that with a huge expenditure of money. I told him off the top of my head that one initiative with both tremendous scientific and strategic significance might be the establishment of a permanent American base on the moon. He was intrigued about that.

4. He was especially concerned to insure that the President receive a briefing on the Soviet space program, which he has been working out with Larry Gershwin.

5. Fletcher feels he has no patron or even a willing ear at the White House, especially on the domestic side. I believe he has come to us both for substantive help and also for our help in sounding an alarm at the White House that decisions on next steps in space, especially if we intend to do anything special in the early 1990's, need to be taken soon.

  
Robert M. Gates

cc: ✓ DDI  
C/NIC  
NIO/SP  
NIO/S&T

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